

## PART V

## Crops

Major Crops

The principal crops of Spokane County are grains and hay. Wheat and other small grains predominate, occupying about 60 percent of the total harvested cropland, or a total of 234,000 acres in the 1954 crop year. Another 24.5 percent, or 71,000 acres were in alfalfa and other hay in 1954. In 1954, acreage of the seven main crops was: winter wheat 109,100 acres, alfalfa 56,500 acres, barley 36,300, field peas 34,715, oats 23,700, spring wheat 18,000 and clover, timothy and other hay 14,200 acres.

Wheat Farming

Spokane County is the fifth most important wheat producing area of Washington and has the second largest number of wheat farms in the state. In 1954 about 40 percent of the cropland was devoted to wheat, most of which was winter wheat. According to 1955 estimates, a total of 111,600 acres yielded 3,652,650 bushels, or about 32.7 bushels per acre. Since 1939, production has ranged from 2,070,000 bushels in 1943 to a peak of 4,591,400 bushels in 1953. In 1954,

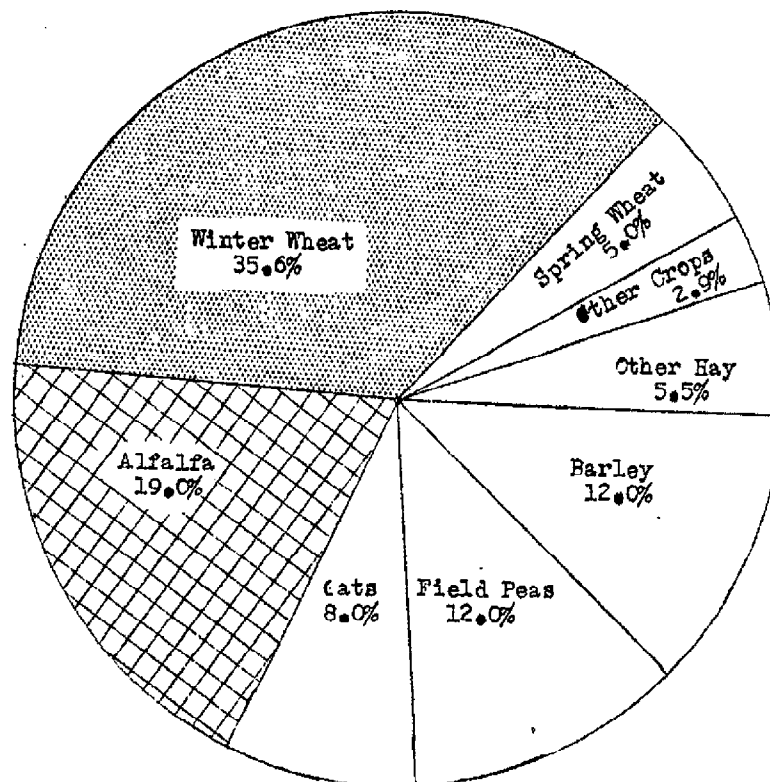


Figure 10.—Percent of Total Cropland in Leading Crops  
Spokane County, 1954.  
(Based on U.S. Census of Agriculture, 1954)

wheat was grown on 1,096 farms in Spokane County, second to Whitman County in number of wheat growers.

Both spring and winter wheat are planted and the acreage seeded to each type varies from year to year. Winter wheat is generally preferred since it out-yields the spring-sown varieties and in most years fall moisture is favorable for germination of winter wheat. If the soil is dry, planting is deferred until spring. Fields of winter wheat that have been damaged by winter killing, erosion or other causes are generally reseeded in the spring.

Spokane County wheat growers have experimented with numerous varieties to get good quality and high yields. In 1955 about 99 percent of the crop was soft white wheat. The Elmar variety, a white club wheat, accounted for about four-fifths of all production. Other leading white wheats were Brevor, Elgin and Golden (forty-fold). Hard red winter wheat made up only about one percent of 1955 production. Turkey and Rio combined dominated the varieties of hard red wheat. Research and experimentation in selection of varieties has involved close cooperative work by federal, state and private agencies and activities coordinated in the Pacific Northwest Crop Improvement Association with headquarters at Walla Walla.

Table 15.- Varieties of Wheat Grown  
in Spokane County, 1955

Classes and Varieties of Wheat	Production (Bushels)	Percent of Total Crop
<u>White Club Wheats</u>		
Elmar -----	2,952,900	80.8
Elgin -----	84,000	2.3
Hymar -----	62,200	1.7
<u>Common-White Wheats</u>		
Brevor -----	227,900	6.2
Idaed -----	133,750	3.7
Golden -----	69,400	1.9
Marfed -----	58,500	1.6
Baart -----	19,700	.5
Rex -----	11,840	.3
Federation -----	3,300	.1
Orfed -----	1,830	.1
<u>Hard-Red Winter Wheats</u>		
Turkey & Rio -----	15,900	.4
Mosida -----	7,000	.2
<u>Soft-Red Winter Wheats</u>		
Triplet -----	3,000	.1
Jones Fife -----	1,430	.1
Total all classes and varieties	3,652,650	100.0

Source: U.S.D.A., AMS, Agricultural Estimates  
Division, State of Washington.

Table 16.- Wheat and Barley: Acreage, Yield and Production  
Spokane County, 1939-1955

Year	All Wheat			Barley		
	Acreage (acres)	Yield (bushels per acre)	Production (bushels)	Acreage (acres)	Yield (bushels per acre)	Production (bushels)
1939	115,100	22.1	2,546,800	9,600	28.0	268,700
1940	119,000	24.9	2,965,400	13,400	21.5	288,400
1941	121,400	24.5	2,970,250	13,800	36.5	503,800
1942	93,800	28.9	2,711,400	27,800	32.5	903,300
1943	87,200	23.7	2,070,700	22,900	32.0	732,600
1944	110,910	26.6	2,945,000	18,200	30.0	546,000
1945	124,600	25.6	3,194,400	15,600	27.0	421,200
1946	146,000	28.3	4,131,000	10,300	26.0	268,000
1947	161,500	25.2	4,074,000	15,100	40.0	604,000
1948	152,000	27.5	4,181,000	15,100	33.0	498,000
1949	149,300	19.0	2,837,900	12,100	19.5	235,900
1950	146,200	27.6	4,039,100	19,800	30.0	594,000
1951	143,000	23.0	3,290,000	13,400	31.0	415,400
1952	165,100	25.8	4,266,600	14,100	38.5	542,800
1953	163,000	28.2	4,591,400	17,700	36.0	637,300
1954	119,900	35.9	4,300,450	36,300	36.0	1,307,000
1955	111,600	32.7	3,652,650	40,000	30.0	1,200,000

Source: U.S.D.A., AMS, Agric. Estimates Division  
State of Washington

Table 17.- Spring Wheat and Winter Wheat  
Spokane County, 1939-1955

Year	Spring Wheat			Winter Wheat		
	Acreage (acres)	Yield (bushels per acre)	Production (bushels)	Acreage (acres)	Yield (bushels per acre)	Production (bushels)
1939	21,600	17.8	383,500	93,500	23.7	2,163,300
1940	20,800	18.0	374,400	98,200	26.4	2,591,000
1941	9,600	16.2	155,700	111,800	25.2	2,814,550
1942	5,800	23.6	136,900	88,000	29.3	2,574,500
1943	48,000	24.9	1,195,700	39,200	22.3	875,000
1944	26,210	22.5	590,000	84,700	27.8	2,355,000
1945	37,000	20.1	743,000	87,600	28.0	2,452,400
1946	31,400	22.1	693,000	114,600	30.0	3,438,000
1947	40,500	22.3	904,000	121,000	26.2	3,170,000
1948	20,000	17.4	348,000	132,000	29.0	3,833,000
1949	11,300	13.0	146,900	138,000	19.5	2,691,000
1950	17,200	20.5	352,600	129,000	28.5	3,676,500
1951	61,000	21.0	1,281,000	82,000	24.5	2,009,000
1952	42,100	21.0	884,100	123,000	27.5	3,382,500
1953	71,600	22.0	1,575,200	91,400	33.0	3,016,200
1954	18,000	26.0	468,000	109,100	36.5	3,982,150
1955	10,500	20.5	215,250	101,100	34.0	3,437,400

Source: U.S.D.A., AMS, Agric. Estimates Division  
State of Washington

Barley and Oats

From the standpoint of acreage harvested, barley is the third major crop. In 1954 the county ranked sixth in the state as a producer of barley, growing 1,307,000 bushels on 36,300 acres, the peak production since 1939. About 6 percent of the entire state barley crop was produced in this county. This grain is grown in the same areas and by the same methods as wheat. As a general practice grain farmers have planted barley as a substitute for wheat when the latter crop is restricted in acreage to comply with Federal programs to limit wheat production. Until the big increase in acreage as a result of the allotment program, barley was grown primarily for the local and regional livestock feed market, and much was consumed by cattle on the farms where grown. In 1955-56 a large part of the crop was exported through Seattle and Portland.

Spokane was the leading producer of oats among Washington counties in 1951. From 23,700 acres a total of 971,700 bushels were threshed or combined, about one-eighth of Washington oat production. This crop also has been grown primarily for the local livestock feed market and alternates with wheat and barley in crop rotations on some farms. Nearly all of the oat crop is threshed, only a small amount being harvested green for hay. Oats have been a traditional feed crop for horses and its decline in acreage is due to the replacement of

Table 18.- Oats and Rye: Acreage, Yield and Production  
Spokane County, 1939-1955

Year	Oats			Rye		
	Acreage (acres)	Yield (bushels per acre)	Production (bushels)	Acreage (acres)	Yield (bushels per acre)	Production (bushels)
1939	24,000	33	792,000	1,220	11.4	13,900
1940	22,600	27	610,200	800	16.5	13,200
1941	20,700	34	703,800	960	9.0	8,600
1942	22,300	39	889,200	810	14.0	11,340
1943	23,100	33	762,300	710	20.8	14,800
1944	21,300	32	681,600	620	10.6	6,600
1945	24,200	31	750,200	410	12.9	5,300
1946	15,000	39	585,000	490	14.0	6,860
1947	16,400	49	803,600	840	11.0	9,200
1948	19,700	31	610,700	630	14.0	8,800
1949	19,400	27	523,800	190	6.0	3,560
1950	23,100	44	1,016,400	170	28.1	4,770
1951	18,800	33	620,400	160	14.0	2,240
1952	18,100	42	760,200	200	8.5	1,700
1953	19,100	45	859,500	300	19.0	5,700
1954	23,700	41	971,700	340	18.0	6,120
1955	22,800	38	866,400	820	13.2	10,800

Source: U.S.D.A., AMS, Agric. Estimates Division  
State of Washington

horses by tractor and motor power. The recent increase in acreage is a result of the wheat acreage restrictions.

### Dry Field and Seed Peas

Introduced in the 1930's, dry field and seed peas have become the third most important crop in Spokane County. Although it is fourth in acreage behind wheat, alfalfa and barley it is the third most valuable cash crop. In 1954 peas were grown on 34,715 acres, the second largest pea acreage in the state. Production amounted to 41,264,295 pounds with a value of over \$2,200,000. In that year Spokane County grew about 25 percent of all dry field peas produced in the State of Washington.

Dry peas have become increasingly popular as a secondary crop in the crop-rotation plans of grain farmers. As an annual legume they are grown to restore soil nitrogen and control erosion as well as to act as a cover and green manure crop. Much of the acreage replaces fallow land.

### Alfalfa and Other Hay

Because there are 794 livestock farms and over 50,000 head of cattle in Spokane County, about 25 percent of the cropland is used for hay crops. In

Table 19.- Clover-Timothy Hay and Alfalfa Hay  
Acreage, Yield and Production  
Spokane County, 1939-1955

Year	Clover and Timothy Hay			Alfalfa Hay		
	Acreage (acres)	Yield (tons per acre)	Production (tons)	Acreage (acres)	Yield (tons per acre)	Production (tons)
1939	3,500	1.3	4,600	39,600	1.2	47,500
1940	3,300	1.2	4,000	41,700	1.6	69,000
1941	3,400	1.5	5,170	45,800	1.9	87,000
1942	3,200	1.7	5,300	44,500	1.9	84,700
1943	3,900	1.6	6,100	43,600	1.6	69,800
1944	4,840	1.3	6,400	44,300	1.3	57,600
1945	4,700	1.4	6,400	44,000	1.5	66,000
1946	4,500	1.5	6,600	40,300	1.6	64,800
1947	4,200	1.4	6,000	36,700	1.5	55,300
1948	3,900	1.7	6,500	36,500	1.8	64,700
1949	3,800	1.4	5,300	42,500	1.3	55,400
1950	3,600	1.6	5,600	41,100	1.3	53,400
1951	4,100	1.5	6,200	47,000	1.3	61,400
1952	4,300	1.7	7,200	48,200	1.7	82,100
1953	5,100	1.7	8,900	54,500	1.8	99,100
1954	4,900	1.6	7,900	56,500	1.6	90,700
1955	5,300	1.5	8,100	57,300	1.4	81,200

Source: U.S.D.A., AMS, Agric. Estimates Division  
State of Washington

1954 there were 75,416 acres in all types of hay. Alfalfa was the major type, 90,700 tons being harvested from 56,500 acres. Spokane was second to Yakima in the 1954 Census in production of alfalfa. Oats and other grains cut for hay amounted to 4,993 tons from 3,723 acres. Other feeds included 4,900 acres of clover and timothy, 2,900 acres of wild hay, 1,850 acres of grass silage and 116 acres of vetch or peas cut for hay. Acreages of alfalfa and other hay have been on a steady upward trend since 1900.

### Vegetables

Spokane County, particularly the Spokane Valley, is an important truck crop area. In 1954 there were about 1,200 acres growing a wide variety of vegetables for fresh and processor markets in the Spokane urban area. The county ranked thirteenth in the state in vegetable farming. Acreages in various commercial vegetables change from year to year, ranking in 1955 as follows: potatoes (800), cabbage (300), sweet corn (200), lettuce (160), cucumbers (90), carrots (75), rutabagas and turnips (40), cauliflower (35), celery (30), and snap beans (25). In 1954 the sale of truck crops returned a total of \$430,406 to about 210 vegetable growers in Spokane County.

Table 20.- Vegetable Crops: Cabbage, Lettuce, Potatoes and Sweet Corn  
Spokane County, 1940-1955.

Year	Cabbage		Lettuce 1/		Potatoes		Sweet Corn 2/	
	Acres	Prod. (tons)	Acres	Prod. (tons)	Acres	Prod. (tons)	Acres	Prod. (tons)
1940	425	2,000	--	--	--	--	--	--
1941	475	1,975	--	--	3,000	5,100	--	--
1942	515	2,065	--	--	3,000	5,000	--	--
1943	800	3,625	--	--	5,000	9,000	--	--
1944	1,000	3,800	255	2,055	3,000	5,400	--	--
1945	1,220	5,200	310	2,650	2,500	5,900	--	--
1946	1,180	5,000	395	3,600	2,100	6,075	--	--
1947	1,185	5,925	380	3,650	1,350	4,000	--	--
1948	1,025	5,125	270	3,400	1,700	5,900	100	400
1949	1,075	5,375	380	3,375	1,200	4,100	110	350
1950	875	4,500	410	3,350	575	2,350	120	350
1951	625	3,100	385	2,265	525	2,120	100	210
1952	475	2,400	380	3,125	380	1,575	75	190
1953	350	1,725	424	3,900	410	1,650	80	160
1954	230	1,150	380	3,000	350	1,600	100	200
1955	300	1,300	160	1,750	800	5,300	200	375

1/ Not available prior to 1941.

2/ Not available prior to 1948.

Source: U.S. Dept. of Agriculture, AMS, Agric. Estimates  
Division, State of Washington.

## Berries

The total acreage of all types of cane, bush and strawberries amounted to about 148 acres in 1955 in Spokane County. The acreage in berries has trended downward since 1939 when the Census of Agriculture enumerated 704 acres. Abnormally cold weather in the winter of 1949-50 and the fall of 1955 decreased plantings of cane and strawberries considerably. Most of the berry farms are near Spokane and in the highland valleys of the northern hills.

## Nursery and Greenhouse Products: Flowers, Bulbs and Plants

Spokane County is third in the state in the growing and selling of flowers, bulbs, seeds, ornamentals, vegetable plants, mushrooms and other specialties grown in nurseries, greenhouses and under intensive cultivation in open fields. In 1954 about 74 acres of land and 834,684 square feet of greenhouse space were devoted to these and allied products. Production of such horticultural specialties was located on 106 farms, mainly in the Spokane Valley. Of high value, these products sold from farms brought a total cash return to the farmer of \$927,875 according to the 1954 Census of Agriculture. The industry accounted for over 4 percent of the total value of all crops from Spokane County farms in 1954.

Table 21.-- Horticultural Specialties: Nursery Products, Greenhouse Products, Flowers, Plants, Bulbs, Seeds, Mushrooms, and other Special Plants.  
Spokane County, 1939-1954

Census Year	Nursery Products (shrubs, trees and ornamentals)		Flowers and flowering plants, bulbs and seeds; vegetables, vegetable seeds, plants, mushrooms grown in fields and under glass for sale.		
	Acres Planted	Sales from Nurseries	Acres in open fields	Greenhouse space (square feet under glass)	Sales from farms during the year
1939	70	\$ 32,377	49	780,786	\$185,185
1944 1/	--	--	--	--	--
1949	52	\$300,627	27	875,461	\$821,732
1954	64	\$196,650	10	834,684	\$731,225

1/ No Census data are available for 1944.

Source: U.S. Census, Agriculture.

## Tree Fruits

Interest in tree fruit farming is considerably lower at present than it was some years ago. About 1900 Spokane County was the state's leading shipper of apples from nearly a half million trees. As the Washington tree fruit industry began to concentrate in the central Washington counties, orchard growing declined in older settled areas such as the Spokane Valley. Colder climatic conditions and lack of large-scale irrigation facilities are factors which have handicapped the Spokane area in the competitive tree fruit industry. Spokane County had only 1,237 acres of orchards in 1954 compared to 5,030 acres in 1930.

The present tree-fruit industry is based on the following number of bearing trees (1954 Census) in orchards of 20 trees or more: apples (14,247), sour cherries (3,839), plums and prunes (3,575), sweet cherries (1,904), Bartlett pears (1,168), other pears (689) and peaches (493). These fruits are still grown on a commercial basis in the county.

Table 22.- Bearing Fruit Trees in Spokane County  
1890-1954.

Year	Numbers of Bearing Fruit Trees				
	Apples	Cherries	Pears	Prunes & Plums	Peaches
1890	18,379	1,120	961	2,624	157
1900	431,701	18,691	26,221	103,578	5,319
1910	418,556	25,140	17,736	37,018	13,770
1920	1,118,814	32,267	26,533	33,608	16,200
1930	209,575	11,928	14,883	12,121	3,397
1940	94,609	4,500	10,542	6,387	585
1950	58,455	4,681	5,071	8,054	1,192
1954 <sup>1/</sup>	14,247	5,743	1,857	3,575	493

<sup>1/</sup> 1954 figures are for trees in orchards of 20 trees or more.

Sources: Washington Tree Fruits, Washington Crop and Livestock Reporting Service, U.S.D.A. and Wash. State Dept. of Agric., Cooperating, 1952. U.S. Census of Agriculture, 1954.